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SUCCESS STORY

Better Water Access Means More Crops

Improved irrigation helps farmers increase profits by \$1 million



As a result of improved access to water, crops such as these grapes are plentiful and more profitable in Tajikistan.

A USAID project helps farmers to improve management of water systems and increase both production and profitability from their fields.

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

Unreliable and poorly managed irrigation and community water systems are widespread in Tajikistan. Limited resources for infrastructure maintenance, lack of technical and management skills, and farmer debt all contribute to the declining condition of the country's irrigation and drainage systems.

A USAID project directly works with those affected most by degraded water systems, providing training in irrigation renovation, operation, and management. The project helped establish 15 water user associations and teaches their members how to make investment decisions to maintain and improve on-farm systems, and how to resolve conflicts and long standing water management and delivery problems. The project also assisted farmers to identify markets for their produce, improve processing technology, and increase knowledge of plant species and farming methods.

According to a 2006 profitability assessment, farmers participating in the USAID-funded project increased their profitability by an estimated \$1 million on 6,310 hectares (15,592 acres) of farm land under irrigation. Profitability increases were achieved in wheat, orchard crops, vegetables, and cotton. Wheat and orchard harvests nearly tripled, vegetable and strawberry yields doubled, while cotton production increased from 1.8 tons to 2.8 tons per hectare (or per 2.5 acres). Although the latter crop led in profitability, high value fruit and vegetable production offers the greatest potential for economic growth. Gauyr Abdulloev, a member of the Mehtari water user association, said, "We have much better harvests now. In 2005, I had a profit from persimmons of about \$3,000, while now it exceeds \$5,500. This kind of increase was attained by nearly all families."

With the harvest's success, farmers are beginning to see how participation in a water user association can lead to better managed water systems and improved livelihoods. Looking ahead, farmers want to continue to increase their investment in irrigation water management.